

International Peace Bureau's Annual Conference
Rolling Back Militarism: A Task for the Global Movement
(Nov. 14-18, 2009, Washington DC)

Session

Nuclear Abolition: It's Time to Get Serious"
(Nov. 15, ICC Auditorium)

Speech

Hiroshi TAKA, Secretary General, the Japan Council against Atomic & Hydrogen Bombs

Dear friends,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you. I am glad that IPB chose for this session the timely theme of "nuclear abolition: it's time to get serious". In the midst of the "Cold War" in the 1970s, when many people still believed that nuclear weapons were working as "deterrent" or "guarantee" of security, IPB took the initiative of organizing with us the first International Symposium on the damage and after-effects of the A-bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It made known to the world for the first time the depth and width of the nuclear calamity wrought by the two atomic bombs. Sean McBride, the then president of IPB, courageously raised the achievement of "illegality of nuclear weapons" as a goal to pursue. It was at the time when the goal of banning nuclear weapons was thought as good but unrealistic. Now, when a decisive turn from "non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" to their "total abolition" is the key task, I hope that IPB will continue to play its pioneering role.

The leader of the nuclear superpower USA says he pursues a world without nuclear weapons, and the Japanese prime minister pledges Japan stands in the forefront of the international effort for it. This extraordinary situation is offering us a new condition. Our signature campaign urging the start of the negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention has spread into all 1800 Japanese cities and villages, and the number of the signatures collected by now has exceeded 2 million. Mayors, chairs of boards of education, presidents of chambers of commerce and industry, leaders of agricultural cooperatives and many others, with whom peace movements have hardly contacted before, are actively joining in the campaign in many places. In some cases, even Japanese traditional neighborhood structure is in full operation to circulate and assemble signatures from their residents.

Our goal is 12 million signatures, representing some 10% of Japan's total population. We will bring all of them to New York. Many people, including young people and the Hibakusha, are planning to bring paper cranes as well. The number of the people planning to come to NY

has already exceeded 900. We have received a letter from the president of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions saying that it has set the goal of 5 million signatures. In addition to our campaign, the Mayors for Peace, Gensuikin and the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (RENGO) and other organizations are also running their own signature drives. Our position is to work in solidarity with everyone who stands in support of the nuclear abolition. I hope that we will start planning a joint submission of the signatures in front of the UN Headquarters on May 2, 2010.

The present development on nuclear abolition is calling for our redoubled effort to reinforce the public support. True, the summit of the UN Security Council on Sept. 24 unanimously adopted a resolution declaring to create conditions for a world without nuclear weapons; the US and Russia are negotiating a START follow-on treaty; Early entry into force of CTBT and start of FMCT negotiations is now promised. Nevertheless, even if all these are achieved, still the world will not be rid of nuclear weapons. Nor will the danger of nuclear proliferation be overcome. Achieving a nuclear weapon-free world requires a very proper and consistent effort to set itself as agenda, negotiate it, and establish a universal, legally-binding agreement.

In the session of the First Committee of the UNGA, however, the US, the UK and the French representatives again opposed the only proposal that called for the immediate start of negotiations on the nuclear weapons convention. They even opposed a resolution calling for a ban on the use of nuclear weapons, although President Obama at the UNSC Summit so unambiguously declared the spread and use of nuclear weapons as a “fundamental threat”.

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), sponsored by the Australian and Japanese Governments, despite its initial pledge that it would set out a realistic path to a nuclear weapon-free world, seems now unable to present any time-frame by which nuclear weapons are abolished. Even at what it calls “vantage point” in 2025, the world described by it will have as many as 2000 nuclear weapons. This will not be a “nuclear weapon-free world”. Rather, it will serve to obstruct the true progress to a nuclear weapon-free world. The reality of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 demonstrates that even one atom bomb is too many for the survival of humanity.

What spurs us into action, however, is not the sense of crisis, nor that of despair. Rather, it is our own trust in the action and choice of the people. They are the true actors of history. They have caused a change, in the US, in Japan, and in many other countries even in these few years. Our challenge is to press it further. Together with many governments that are now with us in calling for nuclear weapons abolition, we can bring about a “change” from the order of the “Cold War” into a world free of nuclear weapons. For 195 days until May 28, 2010, the final day of the next NPT Review Conference, we need to keep telling people everywhere in the world that a nuclear weapon-free world is possible, and that everyone must express his/her will and take

action for it. We thus should develop joint efforts of civil society and like-minded people in or of the governments, so that the output of the review conference, the final document, will clearly show the path to a total ban on nuclear weapons.

To reach this goal, we want to make every effort so that the Second Superpower will turn into the first Super Power, that the people will become the true actor of history, extending solidarity with all movements to end hideous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, all efforts to protect global environment and the global struggles for a just economic order. Before concluding, let me express our deep sense of admiration and respect to the US peace movement. You have stood in the forefront in generating a true “change” in the current part of the 21st century history.